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AUTHOR Gill, Wanda E.
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ABSTRACT

TRIO programs offer support services to students beginning at the 7th grade and continuing through to graduate school. Student Support Services projects provide instruction, tutoring, counseling, learning skills, and writing skills to primarily low income and first generation or disabled college students. Student Support Services projects are currently being studied to determine program effectiveness. Students (N=103) admitted as freshmen to Bowie State University (Maryland) were surveyed about their perceived needs for support services. Tutoring, counseling, advisement, and financial aid needs were ascertained. Students were also asked if they had previously participated in an Upward Bound or Talent Search program or Educational Opportunity Center's activities. Advisement was perceived to be the most needed support service for incoming freshmen. Second to advisement was financial aid, followed by tutoring. The category of counseling needs, as perceived by incoming students, was a distant fourth. It could be that most students, coming from mostly public schools with large counselor-to-student ratios, have had fewer counselor contacts. It could also be that independence is fostered in adolescents who then perceive counseling as a sign of dependency. The need for tutoring may have to do with the respondents' academic achievement in high school. Eleven of the respondents participated in one of the TRIO programs mentioned. This finding reinforces the concept of a TRIO network system. (LLL)

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1991 BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES ADMITTED STUDENT SURVEY

by

Wanda E. Gill, Ed.D.

March 11, 1992

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Preface

I owe thanks to Ms. Lauren Boccabello who typed and edited the manuscript. Dr. Jacob Williams of Outcomes, Incorporated, who compiled the data and developed the charts on "Ethnic Distribution" and "Ethnic/Sex Distribution" of responding students.

Mr. John Cade, Registrar, and Mr. Larry Waters, Director of Admissions, facilitated this study by providing me with the admitted students list. Institutional data from Dr. Sock-Foon MacDougall, Director of Institutional Research, was invaluable.

Wanda E. Gill, Ed.D.

Abstract

Students admitted as freshmen to Bowie State University for the September 1991 semester were surveyed on their perceived needs for support services. Tutoring, counseling, advisement and financial aid needs were ascertained. Students were also asked if they had previously participated in an Upward Bound or Talent Search program or Educational Opportunity Center's activities. Students were able to indicate whether they had a learning or physical disability and whether they intended to work full or part-time.

I. Literature Review

TRIO programs offer support services to students beginning at the seventh grade and continuing through to graduate school.

Student Support Services projects provide instruction, tutoring, counseling, learning skills and writing skills to primarily low income and first generation or disabled college students. Other services include financial aid form completion, advisement and graduate school assistance. The goal of the programs is to increase the retention and graduation rates of these high risk students.

Educational Opportunity Centers provide low income prospective first generation to college adults with educational and career opportunities. Working with community agencies and civic organizations, Educational Opportunity Centers assist people with locating appropriate educational options including the completion of the G.E.D. and higher education through postsecondary school enrollment.

Upward Bound programs provide instructional, recreational and cultural activities to low income high school students through an intensive summer and an academic year program of structured activities.

Instruction in reading and mathematics is often enhanced with instruction in social studies and/or the sciences. Counseling and skills workshops are usually included as project activities.

Talent Search programs seek participants at the seventh grade level through to adulthood for services. Typically, postsecondary and career information is provided as well as motivational and self-esteem building activities. Talent Search programs work with middle and high schools as well as community organizations.

The Ronald E. McNair post-baccalaureate degree program is designed to motivate students to apply for graduate degrees. The program is intended to increase the pool of minorities with doctoral degrees. As the newest of the TRIO programs, Ronald E. McNair has neither been studied nor evaluated.

In a 1979 study of Upward Bound programs, Burkheimer, Riccobono and Wisenbaker found that:

- Upward Bound students had higher expectations for their education than non participants;
- Former Upward Bound students were more likely to attend four year colleges and receive more financial aid than non participants.

In 1983, Steel and Schubert used "High School and Beyond" data and data from high school principals to compare Upward Bound students with peers who did not participate. They found:

- Upward Bound seniors were almost twice as likely to have 3 more years of college preparation courses (math, history and science).
- Upward Bound students have higher expectations for college attendance.

Gaims (1971) found that 45% of Upward Bound students complete the four-year degree, compared with 50% of all populations across the country.

In a 1974 position paper on Talent Search programs, Hampton indicated that disadvantaged students have a different life style than the majority of our society. He recommended student-centered approaches to support services. Hampton emphasizes the importance of counseling to build student self-esteem.

Self (1985) recommends the following intervention strategies for high risk students:

- individualized instruction
- basic academic skills
- counseling
- improved student-teacher relationship
- strategies to build a more positive attitude toward school.

Student Support Services projects are currently being studied by Westat, Inc. to determine program effectiveness. The earlier 1970 General Accounting Office (GAO) study condemned most Student Support Services projects for not having measurable objectives and, therefore, for not being able to demonstrate program effectiveness. The U.S. Department of Education immediately corrected their requirements to include measurable objectives.

There are no studies of Educational Opportunity Centers.

II. Methodology

On July 10, 1991, a survey form was mailed to all students who had been admitted to Bowie State University as of May 30, 1991. A total of two hundred sixty-eight (268) surveys were mailed to regularly admitted students. A total of one hundred three (103) survey forms were returned by August 30, 1991. Frequency distributions were calculated.

Of the one hundred three (103) (100%) students who responded, eighty-six (86) (83.5%) were Black, fourteen (14) (13.6%) were White, one (1) (1%) was Hispanic and two (2) (1.9%) were "Other". The "Ethnic Distribution" chart is included on page 11. In terms of gender, there were thirty-nine (39) males (37.9%) and sixty-four (64) females (62.1%). The "Ethnic/Sex Distribution" chart is included on page 12.

III. Findings

A. Support Services

Of the one hundred three (103) respondents, seventy-six (76) or 73.8% indicated they may need a tutor, sixty-one (61) or 59.2% indicated they may need counseling, eighty-five (85) or 82.5% indicated they may need advisement and seventy-nine (79) or 76.7% indicated they may need financial aid. In terms of the need for support services by race, sixty-six (66) Black, one (1) Hispanic, seven (7) White and two (2) Other students indicated they may need a tutor.

For perceived counseling needs, fifty-two (52) Black, one (1) Hispanic, six (6) White and two (2) Other students indicated they may need counseling. In terms of advisement, seventy-one (71) Black, one (1) Hispanic, eleven (11) White and two (2) Other students responded they may need advisement. Sixty-seven (67) Black, one (1) Hispanic, nine (9) White and two (2) Other students believed they need financial aid.

The need for support services by gender is clear. Thirty-three (33) males compared to forty-three (43) females responded they may need a tutor. Twenty-four (24) males and thirty-seven (37) females indicated they may need counseling. Thirty-three (33) males and fifty-two (52) females indicated they may need advisement. Twenty-nine (29) males and fifty (50) females indicated they may need financial aid.

The need for support services by race and gender is of interest. Thirty (30) Black males, one (1) Hispanic male and two (2) White males indicated they may need a tutor compared to thirty-six (36) Black females, five (5) White females and two (2) Other females. Counseling needs were indicated by twenty-one (21) Black males, one (1) Hispanic male and two (2) White males compared to thirty-one (31) Black females, four (4) White females and two (2) Other females. Advisement was identified as a need for

twenty-nine (29) Black males, one (1) Hispanic male and three (3) White males compared to forty-two (42) Black females, eight (8) White females and two (2) Other females. Twenty-six (26) Black, one (1) Hispanic and two (2) White males compared to forty-one (41) Black, seven (7) White and two (2) Other females felt they may need financial aid.

B. Disability

Of the one hundred three (103) respondents, two (2) or 1.9% indicated having a learning disability whereas one (1) or 1.0% indicated having a physical disability. Of those who self-identified as learning disabled, one was a Black female and one was a White male. The one who self-identified as being physically disabled was a Black male.

C. Working Status

Six (6) or 5.8% of entering freshmen indicated they will work full-time in college compared to fifty-eight (58) or 56.3% who will work part-time. By race and gender, one (1) Hispanic male, one (1) White male, two (2) Black females and two (2) White females reported they will be working full-time in college. Part-time workers in college included seventeen (17) Black males, three (3) White males, thirty-one (31)

Black females and seven (7) White females.

D. Prior TRIO Experience

Four (4) or 3.9% of respondents were in an Upward Bound program, Three (3) or 2.9% of respondents were in a Talent Search program and four (4) or 3.9% were in an Educational Opportunity Center. Of the Upward Bound program participants, all four (4) were Black females. Of the Talent Search program participants, one (1) was a Black male and two (2) were Black females. Of the Educational Opportunity Center participants, one (1) was a Black male and three (3) were Black females.

IV. Discussion

Advisement is perceived to be the most needed support service for incoming freshmen at Bowie State University. Second to advisement is financial aid followed by tutoring. Counseling needs, as perceived by incoming students, is a distant fourth. Clearly, students recognize the need for assistance in structuring their academic programs. They also realize that financial aid assistance determines their ability to stay in college. More than half of those students surveyed (56.3%) expressed an intent to work part-time. This reinforces Bowie State University students' need for funds to stay in college. The fact that six (6) entering freshmen will be working full-time

suggests considerable economic need coupled with financial aid counseling needs.

Generally speaking, counseling is perceived as less important than advisement, financial aid and tutoring. It could be that most students, coming from mostly public schools with large counselor-to-student ratios, have had fewer counselor contacts. It could also be that independence is fostered in adolescents who then perceive counseling as a sign of dependency. In this group of respondents, Black females had the least perceived need for counseling, given the support services listed. Although the numbers of non-Black male respondents was low, males generally perceived less need for counseling than females.

The need for tutoring may have to do with respondent's academic achievement in high school. The average S.A.T. scores were less than 800 for 79% of the admitted freshmen class. The S.A.T. scores, previously reviewed by admitted freshmen, influence their perceived need for tutorial support.

Eleven (11) or 10.7% of respondents participated in one of the TRIO programs mentioned. This finding reinforces the concept of a TRIO network system. With an Upward Bound program, Student Support Services project, Ronald E. McNair program and Training Grant, Bowie State University has demonstrated its commitment to and support of high risk students. It is not surprising that students from other TRIO projects have chosen to matriculate at Bowie State University.

V. Conclusions

There is a need to further study the perceptions of high risk students for the need for support services and their actual use of those services, once enrolled. Some services can mean the difference between campus survival and campus mastery. Financial aid counseling in high school is needed to demonstrate to students how the few added dollars from part-time employment can alter their subsequent financial aid packages. They also need to be counseled on the importance of academic achievement through grades on maintaining financial aid awards and accessing graduate education.

The perception of counseling, as a strategy for both information and change, is needed by admitted freshmen. More exposure to pro-active counseling at the high school level may change the perceived need for counseling in college. A forum where the issues of the availability or lack of availability of role models and mentors is encouraged and accepted promotes students' mental health, especially on those campuses where high risk students are in a minority.

Although this survey was used to facilitate selecting Student Support Services students, it has other uses, too. Surveys and questionnaires of students' perceived needs for support services can be used to justify the existence of those services, now threatened with decreasing state and federal higher education dollars. Such surveys can also be used to determine such service availability for given student populations.

More research is needed on the extent of linkages among TRIO programs. Nationwide, with 1720 separate projects, it is important to demonstrate the compounding effects of project services on students who have participated in two (2) or more projects.

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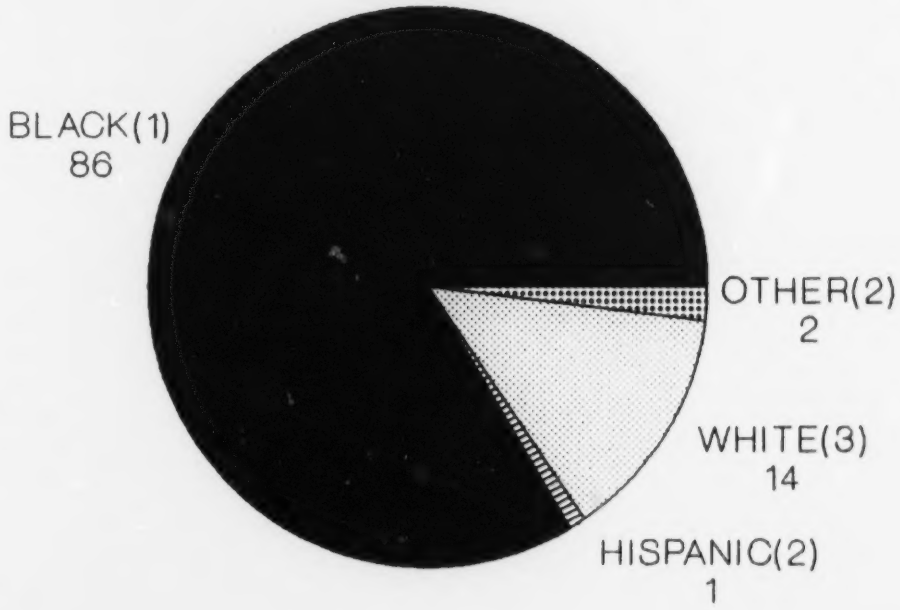
Responding Students



Source: Admitted Student Survey

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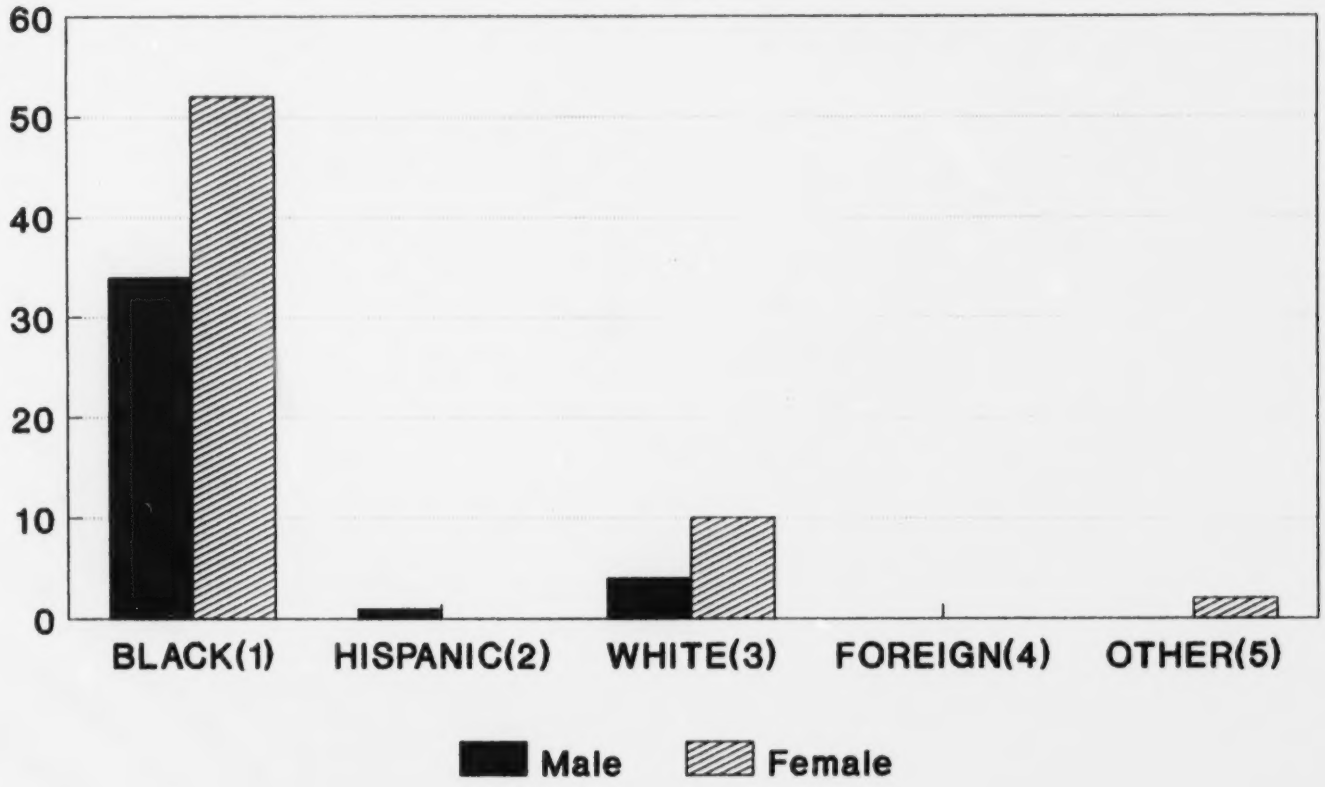
ETHNIC/SEX DISTRIBUTION

Responding Students



Source: Admitted Student Survey

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